BEAUTY'S SECRET

By ALAN MUIR.

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CHAPTER VI.

A SLEEPING WOMAN KISSING A PICTURE and now, the field being clear for her operations, our little Agamemnon in petticass prepared for her part of the affair. She was fully determined to root out of her daughters mind the memory of Percival Brent and to marry Sophia brilliantly before many months were out. No sooner had the young loter departed than she perceived how much she had furthered her own ends by her indulgence to her daughter these last by day especially at the parting hour. Sophia was quite tender with her when they met kissed her, fondled her, and was all the evening so affectionate amid her hardly-regressed grief, that the little plotting woman exan to discover a soft place in her own stony heart. She was gentle with Sophia and took no direct notice of the poor girl's tears, which would come once or twice during the evening, only, as she passed. groked her head softly, intending to signify that she sympathized with her, which she really did To-morrow she would turn over

her new leaf. Sophy, she said at breakfast, "it is ten years this month since we were in Paris. I have a fancy to go over there before the weather gets too hot. Would you like it?" "Anywhere with you, dear," Sophy replied. cherfully. She was determined not to more. and to begin early.

"That's pleasant," the mother answered with a beaming look. "We shall start this

day week." Dresses had to be ordered, hotels had to be chosen, a hundred preparations had to be made, and Mrs. Temple saw with exultation that Sophia entered into all the plans with great spirit. The mother read in this a sign that already Percival was fading out of mind. "I was sure he would," the little woman said to herself "Of course he must as time goes

They stayed a month in Paris, and the whole of the time she managed to keep Sophia entertained in the most diverting way. They had friends there, and the days were passed in a set of choice little pleasures; and whatever that inexhaustible purse of Mrs. Temple's could do to burnish the hours was done with her own taste and tact.

al shall show Sophia what the world is!" the world's worshiper said to herself; "and the Australian boy will soon vanish from her mind, and love in a cottage with him. Cotage indeed! not if you can get a house; and not a house if you can get a mansion! O it is wonderful how slow Sophia is to see the value of life! But she is beginning, and with her good sense she will soon be able to teach instead of being taught."

And now, to Mrs. Temple's unspeakable gratification, there appeared on the scene a man who was plainly thinking of making Sophia an offer. Had the little woman been hosing a suitor she could not so she said afterward-have made a more promising selection. I must not say much about him. He was ten years Sop in's senior, sedate but not gloomy in his manner, his fortune was ample. his birth high, and his appearance was considered prepossessing. He had long been resident in the neighborhood of Kettlewell, but in Paris they were first introduced. He met the mother and daughter at dinner. Mrs. Barbara Temple, hearing of him before, had already wished inly that he might be struck with Sophia. She marked him as he walked into the room, and at sight of him her wishes redoubled. During dinner she watched him narrowly. For a time he did not seem to have even noticed Sophia, but at last he looked at her. The little mother saw his gaze arrested in pleasurable surprise, and for the rest of the evening he managed to look at the

young girl as often as possible. The next day the stranger, whose name was Prendergast, made some excuse for calling upon them, and you may be sure he was graciously received. His conversation pleased Sophia, that was plain; and Mrs. Temple, watching him, saw in his manner that which delighted her beyond expression. Next day a fresh invitation came from the friend at whose house they had first met-just a basty party, the note said.

"Aha," little Mrs. Temple said to herself, 'a basty party! Got up at the instigation of Prendergast, I dare swear. Sherwood and be are such friends. If Prendergast does not take Sophia down to dinner, I am much mis-

He did. And he proved a genial companion, with plenty of talk of the quieter sort, He could interest cultivated women, being artistic and literary, without being a pedant or a bore—that, at least, was his friends' opinion of him. Don't you think Mr. Prendergast very

entertaining?" the mother asked as they drove home. "Very," Sophia replied, emphatically.

The little woman nearly skipped off her seat During these early days Mrs. Temple could never quite make out whether or not Sophia perceived that this promising Mr. Prendergast was in love with her. In love he clearly was, but his manner was so unobtrusive, and his general conversation so lively, that even Sophia might not have detected what was plain to the watching eyes of her mother. It was a nice point for Mrs. Temple to settle. Sophia evidently enjoyed their new friend's society, and as she was no coquette-not as much as she ought to be, her mother used to may she must either have forgotten one lover or not recognized the other. Which was the fact Mrs. Temple longed to know. Sometimes she thought Sophia was in reality preoccupied, and only assumed a vivacity to cover her want of interest. At other times, and more frequently, Mrs. Temple felt convinced that she was truly pleased with Prendergast, and would, after a decent interval,

confess her satisfaction. At last an evening came when Prendergast, calling in upon the Temples, found the mother and daughter at home, and, after ittle conversation, music happened to be mentioned, at which Mrs. Barbara made the most casual remark about Sophia having sung a particular song the night before. Prendergast asked if he might hear it, and Sophia, consenting, with a listless air sat down to the piano and sang. Prendergast praised the song, asked for another and an-other, and Sophia complied in the same listless way. She sang well, but her eyes had a kind of far-off look, very suggestive of Australia. The little mother, however, could not see Sophia's face: Prendergast's she saw, and it told her a great deal. At last Sophia began, "Oft in the Stilly Night," and now no doubt because the theme touched her she sang with great expression and tenderness, and her admirer stood over her, radiant with love and admiration.

"O, that I could see her!" murmured Mrs. Barbara. She scanned Sophia eagerly when the song was finished, but her expression said neither "yes" nor "no." Shortly after, Prendergast bid them good night, and restrained, as his manner usually was, he now, either through accident or with design, let Sophia know the state of his heart. Mrs. Barbara Temple saw a flush come out on her daughter's pale face as she' withdrew her

"Now we shall see," thought the little woman . "Very prettily he managed it, tool observed nothing."

She resolved not to ask Sophia any ques-tion until next morning; but after she had retired a little while, curiosity got the better of her, and in her dainty dressing gown she crossed over to her daughter's room, and tapping gently at the door stepped in. She saw-not what she expected. Sophis

was not at her glass, nor chatting to her maid, nor gone to sleep. The poor girl was at her prayers, and had not heard her mother enter. The little woman stood a moment irresolute, then vanished from the room with a kind of hop; she scarcely liked the prospect of confronting the serious face which she knew would rise to greet her from between

She sat down, however, and fell into a muse, and a look of unwonted gravity ruled her face and features for a time. Probably she was recalling past scenes; for two or three times she shook her head with a kind of reflective sadness, until she was roused by the second chime which had sounded since she last sat down.

"I wonder if Sophy is up now!" she mured. She can't be at that so long." And changing her mind she again stepped over, and, finding the door a jar as she left it, she entered the room once more. The lamp was still burning, but Sophia was in bed, and, her silence indicated, sleeping. The mother walked softly across and looked at her

She was fast asleep. The night was warm, and she had thrown back the quilt a little, and her arm, her brown hair, and a glimpse of her white and innocent breast, together with the repose of her expression, made up a picture which many an artist would have given a year's income to paint. She looked the very image of purity and peace, and even little Mrs. Barbara, who was shot-proof against most forms of emotion, felt moisture stealing into her eyes as she gazed. She bent a little down, and then she saw that the face, now so calm, had been traversed by recent tears. Yes, Sophia had been crying since she lay down, and she had fallen asleep with wetted cheeks.

Something in her hand caught the mother's eye, and she looked closer still. Her hand was beside her face, and the little article she held

was placed so that her sleeping lips just touched it. With great caution and stillness, Mrs. Barbara Temple lowered her eyes, and, stooping and stretching, she managed to see what her daughter was holding. It was a miniature of Percival Brent.

> BOOK FOUR. LADY BEAUTY'S CHOICE

CHAPTER L

"THE SPIDER AND THE PLY." [In one of the passages of his narrative, my old friend, when speaking of "Prendergast," uttered the pronoun "I." As this escaped his lips, he tried to catch back his word, and reddened a little. The secret was out, of course; but seeing his confusion, I affected not to have noticed anything. This artifice, however, did not deceive him, and he immediately told me that he was himself the Prendergast of the story, and an old lover of Sophia Temple. I have thought it well to inform my reader of this fact; but, for convenience of narration, I shall continue to describe "Prendergast" as he originally appeared in the tale. To introduce him afresh, speaking in the first person singular, would, I find, embarrass both writer and reader.1

Greatly was Mrs. Barbara Temple disappointed when the day came for leaving Paris. and still Prendergast had made no further sign. What could it mean! He was the last man in the world to play the coquette masuline; and it was plain that he had assumed the flirtation posture toward Sophia in his sober sort of way. Why advance so far, and then stand still? Mrs. Barbara Temple pondered. Then cries she to herself: "I have hit it!" Her explanation was this: Sophia had quietly signified to Prendergast, by one of those tokens with which love's intercourse abounds, that she loved him not. And he. retiring, and even diffident, had taken the hint submissivaly

"Very provoking of Sophy!" the little voman said. "Very provoking, indeed! If it would do any good I should lose my temper with her. But it would not do good-not yet. Presidergast was just the man for her. I am angry; but I will keep my temper."

And she had her reward. To her great joy, no somer had they returned to Kettlewell than Prendergast appeared on the scene again, and his attitude toward Sophia had not shifted by a hair's breadth. Evidently. then, Sophia had not repulsed him after all. "How fortunate I did not get into a passion!" the ruler of her spirit remarked to herself. "It is a good maxim: Never be really angry; don't even seem to be angry often. I should have had Sophy crying, and set her against Prendergast for life, and all on account of my own hasty judgment." Prendergast's coming to Kettlewell was in

a marked way. He did not stay with anybody, but put up at the hotel; and, when he called on the Temples, he said that he had run over for a few days, in the hope of increasing the pleasant acquaintance with Mrs. Barbara Temple beamed on him one

of her brightest looks. "You speak of your pleasure in renewing the acquaintance," she said. "You say nothing about ours. I can never forget all your attention to us in Paris. And what a pleasant time that was!"

"Part of my visit to Paris," he remarked significantly, "I enjoyed more than anything



He spoke quietly; and Mrs. Temple, glancing at her daughter, saw her bend over her little morsel of lacework with a crimson

"She knows now, at all events," the mother And when Prendergast took his leave, Mrs. Temple resolved fairly to open her mind to

"I have never, Sophy," she began, "never in my life seen a man who more takes my found by experience that affection with lancy." The door was hardly shut upon him. | Sophia was not mere whim or fancy, much "At first I thought him rather dull and, well sanctified." Here our little vivacious sinner made the smallest and genteelest face of scorn. "But that soon wears off; and I declare that, in spite of my first impression, I find him the most truly lively, entertaining, accomplished man I have ever met. What do you think, Sophy!"

"He is very agreeable," Sophia said se-"Polite without affectation, witty without coarseness, serious without cant," Mrs. Temple went on, in true Eighteenth century high style. "He is a specimen of moderation in all things; and moderation, Sophia, next to repose of manner, is the great mark of a gentleman. A gentleman should be a little of everything, and not too much of anything.

Have you ever met so accomplished a man?" "Yes," Sophia replied, dexterously affecting not to hear the last part of her mother's speech, "he is all you say. I like him greatly." "I am going to ask him to dinner," Mra.

Temple said. "What, mamma!" exclaimed Sophia. "Company so soon! Wait a little." "Not company, child," the mother answered. 'All alone. He will like it better than a

"And spoil one of our little snug evenings," Sophia murmured. "Don't, mamma." "Now what is there in our evenings you so

enjoy, Sophia?" "Oh," that dear hypocrite answered, "I enjoy the quiet-and-and our music-andand your talk, mamma, and all your funny, lively stories. You are the best company in

the world!" She put her hands caressingly round her mother's neck, and the mother, who always showed herself pleased with every mark of affection from her daughters, drew one round white arm along her lips, giving it a succes-

sion of tiny kisses. "Poor Prendergast will find it terribly dull at the hotel, Sophy. Really, it would be quite barbarous to leave him there alone," "Well, if you must have him, mamma,

would care for mamma. "But he does not want society," the mother replied; "only a little friendly chat and music. Yes," she added, resolved to carry her point at once, "I shall sit down and write a note to him this moment."

The note was sent that evening, but no answer came. Mrs. Temple began to think she must be altogether out in her surmises. But at twelve o'clock next morning, when Sophia was walking in the town, the name of Mr. Prendergast was announced, and he stepped into the room with an apology for the early call on his lips, and yet with an air which plainly said: "My business is my excuse." Mrs. Barbara Temple assured her visitor that his call was not inopportune.

"In fact," she said, with one of her engaging laughs, "I am famished for a little scandal. Scandal, if you please!"

"My call," Prendergast remarked quietly, "is not of that character. The fact is," he continued, opening his business at once. "I have been greatly struck by your daughter. I wish to use no flattering language, but I assure you that never, never have I seen any young lady who seemed to possess half her attractions. She is a lovely girl!" He stopped, and a slight moisture in his

eyes signified that he was speaking from his heart. Mrs. Temple made a graceful inclination of her head. "It is always agreeable to a mother to hear her daughter praised," she said, "You have

not overrated Sophia, as I, who have watched

her from her cradle, can tell you." "I came to see you this morning partly on your account," Prendergast continued. "I know the responsibilities and anxieties of mother, left in sole charge of 'so attractive a girl. I do not wish to add to them, and the least intimation of disapproval of my suit on your part will be sufficient to make me

abandon it at once, and finally." Possibly this grave gentleman, having eyes in his head, may have known that the little mother was dying to call him son-in-law; and this noble speech may have had a trace of humbug in it. But Mrs. Barbara reverenced this sort of humbug. It was more spicy than reality. She would not have liked Prendergast for really meaning all this civil consideration; but for pretending to mean it, and for uttering the pretense with an air so perfectly pharisaic, she could have kissed him there and then. So, Pharisee feminine against Pharisee masculine, she

coked at him with a small and pensive sigh. "How few men show such consideration." "I came also," said he, "on my own account. If Miss Temple is engaged, or if she s not likely to look with favor upon me, I had rather know it. At least you might perhaps give me your -your -advice "

Mrs. Temple liked him better than ever. "Sly fellow," she said to herself. "If he dances as neatly as he plays demure he must

Aloud she remarked: "In these matters I always like to speak with the greatest possible frankness. We are not driving a bargain across a counter. Your offer is to me, so far as I know you at present," the defenseless woman inserted this attorney clause with the sweetest smile. "most gratifying. I believe you would try to make Sophia happy, and would succeed.' It was Prendergast's turn to incline his head now, and he did it. "As to Sophia," continued the mother,

loining the tips of her fingers in a pondering sort of way, "that is a much more intricate matter." "She is not engaged, is she?" the suitor

"She is not. She is perfectly unfettered. But there has been a sort of attachment; her affections have been-"I understand," Prendergast said with a grave face. "You wish to break it gently to

me. I can assure you I should never try in the remotest way to take from another man affections I should so treasure if they were He was speaking his real mind now, and Mrs. Temple looked at him, hovering between admiration and amusement. She had lived in a world of honor, but not quite honor of this sort; however, she always made her bow

to virtue when it was well dressed and expressed itself genteelly. "A most high-minded feeling," she said. "Just as I should feel myself. But in the present case such scruples would be out of place. This is only a boy and a girl affair; there is no money, no prospect, no hope. have said myself-kindly, but firmly-that a marriage, or even an engagement, is out of

"And you do not think Miss Temple's heart brevocably given away!" It was a lesson in posture and grimace to see the little worldling's pantomimic answer. She disjoined the finger tips, and her white hands with upward palm, her gently raised evebrows, her shoulders quivering with a scarcely perceptible shrug, her quick significant smile, were each members of an unbroken sentence. The meaning was, "The female heart-our heart-is seldom given irrevocably. Try for yourself." It was perfectly Parisian.

"In that case," Prendergast said, reading her like print and with rising spirits, "I am

"You may be," she answered; "but still my daughter is not an ordinary girl. There must be great care. Every step must be taken with thought, and with an end in view. In a word, Mr. Prendergast, I think you had better be guided by me from first to last." "I shall most thankfully," he said; and then he composed himself to listen to his moni-

CHAPTER II. "HONOR YOUR PARENT" AND "SERVE YOUR-

Mrs. Barbara Temple was in her glory. For a less complicated or a more immediately hopeful undertaking she would scarcely have cared. Sophia she well knew, was not an easy woman to turn, and still less was she easy to beguile. Percival Brent had really taken the girl's fancy. He was more prepossessing, with his youth and his generous ways, than this grave, serious stranger, verging on middle life. And the mother had less self-interest or passion. Its roots struck deep. For Mrs. Temple's present purpose the mere vulgar bribes of wealth and ease were not enough; all kinds of motives must be engaged, auxiliaries from innumerable quarters must be united; the campaign must be carefully planned, the advance made neither too early nor too late, just at the moment of fate; and then the kingdom of Sophia's heart would be won. But all this only kindled Mrs. Barbara Temple into excitement. Marrying Car and Sibyl had been child's play: here was a game for a mistress. She felt the same exultation which a chess player feels who, long used to engage with adversaries to whom he can give a castle and win easily. sits at last facing an enemy who would win if he got a pawn or a move. "Everything must be done at the right time," she said. "Everything must be done

in the right way. Whom can I trust for that! Whom? Nobody except myself!" First of all she talked to Prendergast herelf. Mingling a certain deference for his opinion with unconcealed reliance on her own. she told him that for the present he had bet-

ter not make any advances to Sophia. "Rather the opposite," she said. "Seem to retreat. Sophia has already noticed your liking for her. Now, if you withdraw for a while, you will puzzle her. She will say, 'Did he admire me after all, or not? Has he, on coming to know me better, found me less attractive? You will excite her curiosity, which, let me tell you, is a great thing for a lover to do. Besides, although Sophia may not care for you, having once secured your admiration, she will not like to lose it. No woman wishes that a man who once admired her should cease to admire her. She may not care for him-she may even have an aversion to him-but she likes him to care for her. And, I say, if Sophia finds that you grow cooler, she will wonder, question with herself, feel a little piqued; and then, if you turn round again and confess her power -well-well-she will be rather more disposed to give you some slight encouragement.

Am I letting you into too many of our

answered, "I could have vanguished Cleo-

She bowed, but scarcely took time to taste the flavor of the compliment. No sooner was luncheon over than, making some excuse for dropping Sophia at a friend's house at one end of the town, she drove out to see Sybil, the first ally whose co-operation she meant to secure. Sibyl was alone in her drawing room, and certainly all around were abundant signs of the magnitude of the price she had fetched in the matrimonial exchange. She looked very handsome, quite superb, Mrs. Temple thought, as she rose to meet her mother. But there was discontent in her face.

"Sibyl, dear," the mother said, "your taste is nothing short of perfect. This drawing room grows lovelier every day. Where did you pick up that tittle picture? "In Bond street," she answered, listlessly. "You paid a price for it, I can guest

"I know nothing about prices," Sibyl an swered haughtily. "And never need." replied her mother. quickly. "Happy girl!"

Sibyl made no answer. "I have come, dear," her mother now said. "to ask your assistance in a very delicate matter. Prendergast wants to marry So-"Sophia will not marry at present," Sibyl

"Not unless we are very judicious. But with management she will. Prendergast is a man after her own heart, just the sort of man she would have fallen in love with if this ridiculous affair with Mr. Brent's son did

not stop the way. Now Sophia must not per this offer by. I am determined she shall not. Prendergast is very rich, and he is will-"And what of that?" Sibyl asked "What of that? Why, here you three girls will be in the one neighborhood, and that a pleasant one. Each will have a hand-

some establishment; and think how you will be able to put yourselves at the head of everything. You will soon be the leaders of the county; with your looks and your cleverness and your taste you ought to be. You can have your London houses, you and Sophia immediately, and Car when those old people die. You can have your trips to the continent, your entertainments at home-O. Sibyl, why had I never such a chance when I was your age! How I should have enjoyed the world! "You did enjoy it, mamma."

"Now, Sibyl," the mother went on, not noticing this remark, "there is one thing which I wish you to impress upon Sophia; that is the comfort of riches. You can speak from experience; tell her how fine a thing wealth is. Impress it upon her. You might even say, for you know Sophy's turn of mind, that you find yourself able to do much good churches-anything can be done with money. That is my special charge to you, Sibyl; the next time you and Sophy meet tell her something of your experience of riches. Now where is Archibald?"

"He went into the library after lunch," Sibyl said rather sulkily. "He wanted to ead The Times." Two minutes later Mrs. Barbara Temple was confronting her son-in-law Goldmore. who, with his newspaper laid across his knee, waited to hear what it was of which

her shrewd face was full. "Sophia has had an offer-at least it has been made to me-from Mr. Prendergast," Goldmore bowed his head in a way which signified approval of Mr. Prendergast. Then

"It would have been a good connection "If what?"

"If Sophia had not fallen in love with

"Now, my dear Archibald," cried Mrs. Temple, slapping her hands together slightly in her vexation, "surely you know better than that. Sophia has not given her heart away; it is a girlish whint, and we might safely leave it to cure itself; only time presses. Sophia must marry Prendergast. should die of chagrin if I saw another woman's daughter get him now. In this matter you can help me. You have weight and dig-

nity, and you speak in a commanding way. Now, I want you to press this marriage upon Sophia, from the point of obedience, duty and prudence. You can tell her how much my heart is fixed upon it; and you might say something about the blessing attached to those who obey the fifth commandment." Here our little mother coughed slightly, blessing being rather a foreign expression to her organs of speech. "Sophia is a serious girl, and will think of that." "But, Mrs. Temple," Goldmore replied, "I

hardly like to use such an argument with Sohia. From what I have seen of her, I should not for a moment doubt that her conscientiousness is much greater than my own; and it seems rather hypocritical, and even oppressive, to urge upon the girl an obligation for which, as a matter of fact, she has a greater regard than I should have had myself. Besides, if she really loves this young

"A lad without a sixpence, and without a prospect! O, Archibald, you are not giving your mind to the subject! Tell me now"-the ittle woman faced him like some warrior of argument—"ought not both men and women to regulate their lives with an eye to prudence. common sense and the main chance?"

Poor Goldmore! Prudence, common sense, and an eye to the main chance had been his laws of life; prudence, common sense, and an eye to the main chance had made him a two hundred and fifty thousand pound man. His own deities were before him, and he must do them reverence.

"You are a wise woman," he said; "I will do as you desire. I will talk over the matter with Sophia." "Now," Mrs. Barbara Temple said, as her trim little chestnuts whisked her along to the residence of Egerton Doolittle, "I have se-

cured Sibyl and her husband." She checked off two fingers. "I want three more. I shall get them; and then, Sophy, dear, I think your future will be safe; and in years to come you will thank your poor old worldly mother!"

CHAPTER III.

EGERTON DOOLITTLE GIVES HIS VOICE FOR SEVERE MEASURES. When Mrs. Barbara Temple was ushered into Caroline's drawing room, she caught sight of the young husband and wife sitting side by side on a sofa. Her coming was evidently unexpected, and Egerton, ejaculating 'My gracious!" dashed out into a conservatory adjoining the drawing room, while Caroline, composing herself, met her mother with just the smallest signs of momentary confusion. The little woman glanced at two love birds perched side by side in a cage which hung over the conservatory threshold, and then she recalled Sibyl, sitting in her lonely splendor.

"For some things," our little Pilpay remarked privately, "for some things a young fool is better than an old sage. But these are only the etceteras of life: Sibyl has secured the grand thing, after all, and more of it than Car. Life is pretty equal."

"Caroline, my dear girl," she said after a few casual words, "I have come this morning to consult you on a matter of the greatest importance. I know your good sense, and the energy with which you can act when you have decided what is right to be done. If it was not for you, Caroline, and your tact and judgment I should be in despair." With this insinuating preface she told the

expanding in the most glowing style in praises of his person, character and estate, she turned to the dismal topic of Sophia's infatuation for that penniless Australian boy. "For this whim, this caprice, this idea, which is not worthy to be called an idea, she will actually sacrifice a man who is not only a man of family and fortune, but whose character is of the very pattern she most professes

to admire. I protest, Caroline, it will drive

"And unless you co-operate with me, work with me, and work hard and wisely, too,

Sophia will lose the best chance in life she

ever can have. I can do not

"It certainly is unfortunate," Car said.

me wild."

story of Prendergast's proposal; and after

oline replied; "but you must tell me what

"It was on my tongue, dear girl. You must have a conversation with Sophia-let it seem accidental-and say you have beard about Prendergast. Praise him a little: but that is not your particular point. Set before Sophy my delight at the idea of the marriage; the happiness it will give me; how miscrable I shall be if it goes off. Sophia is an affectionate girl, and I believe would do a very great deal simply to show her love to me. Now, you must put before her strongly my feelings and hopes; for, indeed, dear, if Prendergast does not marry ber shall die of vexation. Now go over and over this matter with Sophia. You know, Car, she is not like you-clear-headed, of sound judgment, swing what is right at a glance. and firm to carry out her ideas. She is soft. yielding, tender-bearted. If I were you I should coax her a little, kiss her, be tender with ber; all that will tell with Sophia. Now I know, my love. I have given you a difficult task to perform, and nothing but my knowledge of your tact would have encouraged me to ask you to undertake it. But you will do t, and do it well. Sophia will marry Pren-

dergast, and the praise of the affair will be yours." The little mother had not said one syllable about Car's cleverness which was unmerited: but however astute that young lady might be, she was like an osier wand in the skilled hands of her mother. With wonderful enthusiasm Car took up the scheme, and not less wonderful was the simple obedience with which she resolved to follow out the directions that were given her. Independent and in-ventive as she was in herself, she yet learned her mother's words by heart as faithfully as if she had been getting up a scene in a play. She did not insert a word of her own; and the more she showed her readiness to follow her mother's instructions implicitly, the more did that unrivaled student of human nature laud her quickness, her resource, her capacity for maneuver and benevolent stratagem.

Presently Egerton looked in from the conervatory giggling and blushing. "I have heard all you have been saying to Carry," he said. "Twasn't listening, I hope. Couldn't help it if it was, the other door being locked. O. Mrs. Temple, do you know I really think you must be a clever woman; I really think you must be. You seem to know everything and to manage everybody. I quite agree with you about instilling things into Sophia's mind. Impress upon her"here Egerton teapotted himself and with outstretched hand began to spout fluently-"impress upon her the tremendous importance of marriage. Tell her that marriage is the sort of thing that must be done, you know. You can assure her from me that it is tremendously important. And you can tell her ter whom you marry as the thing itself. Do that, and the rest will follow. Of course I was not speaking of myself quite, you know, not altogether; for Carry is such a tremendously nice girl that I don't hardly know that I could have found another wife who would have made me so happy-at least, not without a great deal of trouble, you know. But I mean you are to impress on Sophia that, in a general way, it does not much metter whom you marr . And then, if she won't see itwell, I sca. sely know what to advise." The stream now became intermittent, and Egerton began to show symptoms of wandering in his mind. "I was reading some book lately about a girl that would not marry somebody: and what her parents did was, they shut her up in some tower somewhere, and kept her on bread and water. But you see you have

no tower at the Beeches. Still, you might try the bread and water. It is wonderful what diet does." Off flew our elderly little Venus once more. charioted hither and thither on the errands and the mischief of love. She knitted her brows, she made her little glove finger tips

meet, she set a reflective mouth, and thus she conned over the state of her plans. "Sibyl is to place before her the comforts and the advantages of wealth; Sibyl will do it well. Archibald Goldmore is to press duty upon her, and take her on the ground of the fifth commandment. I can see him nowslow, solemn, parsonic. O, if I had time to laugh over it, I should. And Caroline will work on her feelings; that will come best from Car, who has not much feeling of her own, because Sophia will reason: 'Well. if Car thinks so, there must be something in it.' Interest, obedience, affection. Yet, it is not had. And there is more to come. Sophia, Sophia, I shall marry you, without a tower, or bread and water, either! Simply by tact, dear-by tact."

CHAPTER IV. THE RECTOR AGREES WITH MRS. TEMPLE. Her flying wheels next ceased their swift revolutions at the door of the rectory, and the little woman alighted with the step of five-and-twenty. She shook her head as she marked how the once brilliant flower beds lay neglected, and the stone steps, once white as porcelain, were turning green with neglect, Dead leaves strewed the path; the blind of the dining room window hung awry; whatever she saw told her that the enchanter Gold had wandered off with his wand to other domains, and that his successor, Poverty, had already marked all things for his own. "I should just like Sophia to see this place," our moralist said. "It would be a lesson for

her." She spoke as solemnly as if she had been the pensive and didactic Mr. Hervey walking among his tombs. "A few months ago everything was trim and shining with money; now-and this is poverty, pious poverty!" she said, with inexpressible scorn in her face. "I hate poverty."

The door opened, and instead of the man servant of other days, well clad, well brushed and obsequious, there stood before her an illdressed girl, whose skirts, tucked up on one side and loose on the other, told of work hastily left. Mrs. Barbara Temple noted the red bare arm and the dirty finger nails; she lost sight of nothing, and all she saw turned into a moral lesson. "I like to live," she thought; "but better be

dead than poor." As she was going into the library a whiff from the kitchen tickled her nostrils, but not gratefully. Soup, I suppose," she murmured again. "Well, I have not to eat it, so I need say noth-

The part she had here assigned herself was none of the easiest, and she felt she must be discreet and guard her lips. Mr. Brent advanced to meet her, and tried to put on his old cheery smile, but the conspicuous failure made the attempt more dismal than a plain. honest sigh. Mrs. Barbara conversed with her usual spirit and gayety for a few minutes, until the question came naturally: "Have you any news of your son?"

"None since the vessel was last heard of." he answered. "At that time he was tolerably "I liked that young man." she said. "I never regretted anything in my life more sincerely than having to abandon the hope of

calling him a relation."

"Has your daughter abandoned it;" Mr. Brent asked, with a faint smile. "How kind of you!" she thought; "you have said just the word I wanted.' "That question," she answered, "is one which I cannot reply to as readily as I should wish. We know what young people are; there is always a great deal of sentimentality about them. It amounts to nothing. In time it wears off. While it lasts, however, it makes their management difficult. Of course, you are of my opinion, that the keeping up of this engagement, even in the remotest way,

for both of them. Don't you think so?" "I do," the poor clergyman replied. He had no spirit left. Never a man of independent will, he was now reduced to a mere animated machine, worked in matters of this sort from the outside.

would be injurious both to your son and to

my daughter. No good can ever come of it.

and the sooner it is finally settled the better

"My daughter has a wild romantic attachment to your son," Mrs. Temple continued. "Now you can help me to put an end to this affair. You only can put an end to it, but you can do so." "I can, can I?" he replied.

"Yes; tell Sophia that you do not approve of it, and that you consider it likely to be in-

you are tolerably certain that even if she remained constant to him be would not remain constant to her. Just fancy. Mr. Brent! a

young man at the most impulsive period of life, thousands of miles away, and with no hope of seeing her for years! Constant, indeed! Why, in a fairy tale it would be too absurd to be true!" He sat before her, passive and receptive, agreeing to everything, promising every-thing. But, indeed, if the proud Sibyl, and Caroline had bent to her will, little wonder

the inflexible Goldmore, and the intellectual if our poor rector bent, too, broken as his nerves and will were by the one terrible storm of fate. Whenever she asked him, "Do you think so!" he answered, "I think so." Whenever she said, "Will you say so to Sophia!" he replied, "I will say so." And thus she faced him, energetic, full of plot and will, talking fast, and with frequent action driving her meaning home. An onlooker might have thought the scene a private mesmeric experiment, and Mrs. Barbara Temple the strong and resistless operator, and poor Mr. Anthony Brent the helpless subject around whose volition and reason another m I was coiling itself in swift and powerful

"So," said our little mother, when this tack was done, "you are to set before Sophia the facts of the case, and its probabilities. You are to tell Sophia that Percival ought not to marry ber if he could, and that, in time, be would not marry her even if he ought. Interest duty, affection, probability. Sophia, shall bem you in, and force you to yield!"

CHAPTER V. MRS. TEMPLE PLAYS THE PART OF MRS.

Prendergast remained to be molded, and our strategist took care to have an interview with him before the great event of his proposal came off. For this dialogue she assumed a specially grave, not to say pious, air, as she now fully understood Prendergast's

habit of mind. "It is a serious matter," she said, in the voice and face of her new character of Mrs. Sober. "Yes, marriage is a serious matter." To this sentiment, of which the force, like that of many a popular sermon, lay rather in the delivery than in the matter, Prendergast

assented, and business began. "You are going to propose to Sophia?" she said, in confidential tones; for, indeed, they had chatted the affair over several times. "I am, with your permission."

"Very well. Are you above taking a hint?" -she paused here, for the most engaging smile made up of self-confidence, self-depreciation, and a coquettish consciousness that all the charms of her sex had not yet forsaken her-"are you above taking a hint from a withered old woman?" "You must be going to take me to consult

some elderly friend of yours?" he answered with successful raillery. "Capital, capital!" she cried, forgetting Mrs. Sober, and clapping her hands. "Oh.

Prendergast, I do wish you would be more like that all the day round! It becomes you vastly! O, I should make something of you, too—in time!" Grave Prendergast could stand this no longer. He burst into a laugh, which our little mother merrily echoed, until she again

to-day. Turning as solemn as a Quakeress. she asked: "But, seriously, will you take a hint?" "Seriously, from you I will take as many

remembered that seriousness was her part

hints as I get." "Well, then, remember this: Sophia is a girl whose head is full of the idea of usefulness and activity, and being elevated, and elevating others, and-you can finish the sentence better than I, for you hear more of that sort of talk. I am not saying anything against all that. In its way, and at proper imes, it is very well; but I maintain, and always have done, that it is not the thing a woman should live for. Just fancy, my dear Prendergast, what a whole world full of serious people would be! Serious people, and nobody else! Really, I believe you serious people would want a few of us sinners back to cickle you a little! But this is not my business. We must take Sophia as she is. She has not grown up in the way I expected, but she is a good girl, and amiable. When shall I get back to my point? Sophia, then, being so full of these notions of service and aspiration and duty, and all the rest, in proposing to her you must fiddle on that string-I mean,' said Mrs. Sober, withdrawing this rather flippant form of speech, "you must let her know that such is your view of life also. It

is, is it not?" "It is," Prendergast answered, divided quite between sincerity and amusement at the singular little idol that chattered away before

"Then be careful you let Sophy know it. And, Prendergast, be careful, too, that you tell Sophy that you have a work in life-I suppose you have—and that she is the woman that can help you to perform it. Present yourself before Sophia in that form, as a man who has a work to do-such a work as she would approve of; such a work as she would do herself if she could. Tell her she can give you strength, guidance and all that sort of thing. This is the way such a girl must be carried. We none of us like to be thought mere dolls, dressed for your drawing rooms. and, least of all, do girls like Sophia like it. Tell her you will go through the world leaning on her, as they do in pictures, half supporting, half reclining. Tell her that you will draw inspiration from her eyes and from her character, and then Sophia is yours. O. I wish I had been a man, just to teach the

rest how to propose to us!' "Well, Mrs. Temple," Prendergast said, repressing his smiles with no small difficulty, "there is a great deal in what you say. And I can assure you that whatever woman I proposed to, or thought I should wish to propose to, I should meditate something of the kind." "If you really mean it," she said, "it will come a great deal better. It always does." "Surely you would not have me say what I

did not mean?" "Fudge, Prendergast, to put it in that way! In love making we are not understood to mean what we say. No more than a monarch on the stage is understood to mean what he people. (He has two rooms meanwhile, which he means to keep to himself.) But in this particular case, if you do mean it, why, of course, you will say it with more emphasia. Ah, dear me," she added, resolved to efface the impression of her flippancy, "I daresay you are right, Prendergast, after all, and we wrong. But the world is so pleasant, one can't help loving it."

She sighed this out so naturally that Prendergast reflected that there must be good in this merry old pagan after all; and he pleased himself with the thought that before she departed from human life she might rise to a higher mood and confess her follies. So our little mother showed admirable tact, for she gave the finishing touch to her pupil, and when bidding him good-by, she asked: "Now, Prendergast, will you say exactly

what I have told you?" He answered: "I will, exactly."



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